

## Exhibit 7

U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services  
*Office of Policy and Strategy*  
Camp Springs, MD 20588-0009



**U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services**

## **Honduras as TPS-Designated Country: Comparison of Country Conditions between Initial and Latest**

### **TPS Designation Time Frames:**

- Initial TPS designation Period: January 5, 1999, through July 5, 2000
- Redesignation Period: July 5, 2018, through June 30, 2024; through July 5, 2025

### **Reasons for Initial TPS Designation for Honduras:**

According to Federal Register (64 FR 524) and the country condition summary of USCIS's 2023 TPS Report to Congress, Honduras was designated to TPS country because a natural disaster (Hurricane Mitch) that prevented it from being able to adequately handle the return of its nationals.

### **Reasons for Extension and Redesignation of TPS for Honduras:**

Since its initial designation in 1999, TPS for Honduras was extended 13 consecutive times under the same statutory basis of environmental disaster until July 5, 2018. On June 21, 2023, DHS rescinded the 2018 termination<sup>1</sup> of the TPS designation of Honduras and simultaneously extended the TPS designation of Honduras for 18 months from January 6, 2024, through July 5, 2025, due to:

- Ongoing natural disasters that impact infrastructure rebuilding
- Public health challenges related to mosquito-borne illnesses
- Violence and social and political concerns

### **Summaries of Country Conditions from the FY2023 and FY2024 TPS Report to Congress**

Numerous environmental, political, and social crises since Hurricane Mitch have prevented Honduras from recovering from the hurricane and continue to impair from ensuring the safe return of its nationals.

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<sup>1</sup> After conducting an independent assessment of the country conditions in Honduras as they existed in 2018 and exist today, Secretary Mayorkas determined that Honduras's 1999 designation should not have been terminated. The conditions in Honduras that gave rise to its TPS designation in 1999 persisted in 2018 and continue to this day.

Although recovery efforts were implemented in the years after Hurricane Mitch, the effects of the hurricane set back Honduras economically and socially by as much as 20 years. Since Honduras was designated for TPS in January 1999, various natural disasters, and related environmental concerns—including hurricanes, tropical storms, flooding and heavy rain, severe drought, and mosquito-borne illnesses—have contributed to loss of life and damages to property and infrastructure and prevented the country from fully recovering from the hurricane. Since Hurricane Mitch, Honduras has been impacted by a “repetitive cycle” of storm-related damage to infrastructure and 16 of the 18 departments in the country recently reported damaged roads, collapsed bridges, devastated crops, flooded houses, and landslides (IOM, 2022). Additionally, since the extension of TPS for Honduras in 2018,<sup>2</sup> violence and social and political concerns have adversely impacted living conditions and hindered recovery from environmental disasters, continue to inflict damage on the population and impact Honduras’s ability to adequately handle the return of its nationals (OCHA, 2023).

### **Summaries of Country Conditions of Honduras from the Latest Reports of Various Sources**

While Hurricane Mitch was a sudden catastrophe, which contributed significantly to the decision to grant Honduras designation, today's crisis of Honduras is more systemic and long-term. Honduras continues to face longstanding structural challenges, including systemic corruption, political interference in the justice system, insecurity, a very large percentage of the population living in poverty, and lethal attacks against environmental defenders. The administration of President Xiomara Castro has made little progress in fighting corruption and restoring democratic institutions. Honduras continues to struggle with widespread corruption, a compromised judiciary, high levels of violence, and attacks against environmental defenders. Despite some positive developments that suggest a brighter future, it is expected that political stability risks remain elevated in Honduras in 2025 due to a weak policymaking environment and fragile security landscape (Fitch Solution Company, 2024). As such, Honduras is not considered safe for returning nationals, especially those vulnerable to gang violence, political persecution, or economic hardship (Bertelsmann Stiftung’s Transformation Index [BTI], 2024; Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2025).

#### *Political Corruption and Power Consolidation*

Despite campaigning on an anti-corruption platform in 2022, President Xiomara Castro’s administration has been marred with corruption, criminal penetration, and nepotism. (CSIS, 2024) According to Ryan C. Berg, director of the Americas Program and head of the Future of Venezuela Initiative at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), “Governing the

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<sup>2</sup> The TPS designation of Honduras was statutorily automatically extended for 6 months (from January 6, 2018, through July 5, 2018) after the Secretary of Homeland Security did not make a determination on Honduras’s designation 60 days prior to the previous expiration (January 5, 2018). Subsequently, on June 5, 2018, the Secretary announced a determination to terminate TPS for Honduras, effective January 5, 2020.

country is largely a family affair, with only a small circle of trusted individuals appointed to key posts in the presidential cabinet.” Castro and her husband, Former President Mel Zelaya, has family members all over the administration, including two of their sons who serve as her private secretary and presidential adviser (CSIS, 2024).

A 2022 State of Emergency declaration was implemented to attempt to address the extortion from gangs and other criminal actors that is pervasive in the country. While some see this as a desperate attempt to do something to address a problem that is financially ruining small businesses, many others see this as an abuse of government powers that limits the civil liberties of its citizens (BTI, 2024).

In September 2024, President Castro presented to the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres a second draft agreement to create an International Commission against Corruption and Impunity in Honduras (CICIH). The revised proposal would ensure CICIH’s independence and autonomy, allow it to independently prosecute cases, investigate high-profile cases, propose legislative changes, and train personnel to fight corruption. However, progress on establishing the CICIH remains slow (HRW, 2025).

Also in September 2024, the head of an anti-corruption organization demanded that she resign after a video was released in which her brother-in-law, Carlos Zelaya, allegedly received drug money. While President Castro did not resign, Zelaya and a congressional leader, resigned after admitting to meeting with drug traffickers in 2013. Zelaya’s son, who was minister of defense, also resigned. A few days before Zelaya’s resignation, Castro annulled an extradition treaty with the United States, which had allowed for the extradition of Honduran nationals accused of drug trafficking, including former President Juan Orlando Hernández, who was sentenced to 45 years in prison by a US federal court in March (HRW, 2025).

### *Freedom of Expression*

Freedom of expression is not guaranteed. Honduras created a mechanism in 2015 to protect journalists, human rights defenders, and justice officials. This mechanism, however, has serious flaws: It lacks financial autonomy, qualified staff experienced in human rights issues, and trust from defenders (HRW, 2025). As a result, journalists, particularly those investigating crimes against women and minorities, continue to be threatened and often assassinated.

According to the Committee for the Protection of Journalists, since 2001, more than 90 journalists have been killed, while many others have been threatened or forced to leave the country. Some have been persecuted by the government and corrupt officials and have been subjected to criminal proceedings for defending their rights to a sustainable livelihood. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Honduras reported that 453 human rights defenders and journalists were harassed, threatened, or intimidated in 2023 and 15 were killed (HRW, 2025). According to the Honduran Human Rights Commissioner, virtually none of these murders and threats ever lead to criminal prosecution or conviction (BTI, 2024; UNHRC, 2024).

Environmental human rights defenders have suffered serious abuses and intimidation including homicides and physical and psychological attacks on their well-being. Some have been persecuted by the government and corrupt officials and have been subjected to criminal proceedings for defending their rights to a sustainable livelihood. (UNHRC, 2024).

#### *Conflict Surrounding Land Rights*

Land rights and natural resource disputes remain a pressing issue in Honduras, with Indigenous peoples, Afro-Honduran communities, and peasants disproportionately affected by violence, illegal land seizures, and forced displacement (Gonzalez, 2024; HRW, 2025). Protesters are met with the same serious human rights abuses and intimidation tactic that face journalists, including allegations that corrupt officials and companies are using crime gangs to intimidate and attack people who are trying to defend their human rights to a healthy and sustainable environment. (UNHRC, 2024).

In September 2024, Honduras' Supreme Court declared unconstitutional the laws permitting the creation of so-called Areas of Employment and Economic Development (ZEDEs), geographic areas in which private companies were granted broad governance powers, including to establish their own courts (VOA, 2024). Human Rights Watch criticized ZEDEs and called for their repeal (VOA, 2024). The court ruled that the ZEDE framework violated human rights. Honduras Próspera Group Inc., a company which owns a ZEDE in Honduras, brought a case against Honduras before the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) for the repeal of the legal framework for special economic zones. Próspera filed for damages of US\$10.7 billion, approximately 30 % of Honduras' 2023 GDP. In February 2024, Honduras denounced the ICSID Convention (ICSID, 2024; HRW, 2025).

#### *Socioeconomic Outlook*

Honduras is struggling with a severe economic crisis, including a weakening currency, high inflation risks, mounting debt, and widespread poverty. It also estimated that nearly 2.8 million Hondurans need humanitarian aid, and growing numbers are forced to move and seek refuge outside the country's borders (OCHA, 2023).

Honduras remains one of the poorest and most unequal countries in the Western Hemisphere, with a Human Development Index (HDI) score of 0.621 in 2021 (down from 0.632 in 2019) and a global rank of 137, a ranking that has improved little over the past decade (BTI, 2024). Inequality is stark – the worst in Latin America, according to the most recent data from Oxfam – and endemic corruption leads to market distortion and the development of deeply entrenched criminal structures, particularly in public procurement. According to the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime 2021 report, the distinction between the state and criminal organizations is somewhere between hazy and nonexistent (BTI, 2024).

According to the World Bank (2024), 95.7% of Hondurans have access to a basic water source, 83.8% can access basic sanitation and 93.2% have access to electricity. However, the electricity

is unreliable and expensive, poor infrastructure limits water and sanitation, and the country struggles with corruption, unpredictable tax application and enforcement, high crime, low and education levels, all of which prove disincentives to investment (BTI, 2024). According to government data, in 2023, 64 % of the population lived below the poverty line (down from 73.6 % in 2021), and 41.5 % lived in extreme poverty (down from 53.7 % in 2021). Honduras maintains one of the highest levels of income inequality in Latin America with a Gini index of 48.2 in 2023 and continues to face huge obstacles in developing a market economy that includes most of its citizens. (BTI, 2024; CIA, 2024; HRW, 2025).

Fitch Solutions (2025) forecast positive change in the coming years. Specifically, they predict real GDP growth of 3.1% in Honduras over 2025, an upward revision from our previous forecast, but a slowdown from 3.7% in 2024. Weaker private consumption will be the primary drag on economic growth in 2025, mainly due to higher interest rates and falling remittances. Exports will rebound in 2025 as weather conditions normalize and the production of crops such as coffee, bananas, and palm oil

#### *Human Rights Violations of Women and Minorities*

Gender inequality levels and discrimination against women and Indigenous peoples across health, education, labor market participation and representation are also higher due to the growing inequalities. Compared to men, many more women from Honduras live in poverty, confront various levels of gender violence daily, have no income of their own and, on average, earn 65 cents for every dollar a man earns (OXFAM, 2025). The Gender Equality Index has remained virtually unchanged since 2014, with Honduras at 0.431 in 2021 (BTI, 2024). To further compound the problem, women rights defenders live in fear for their lives as they are continuously threatened (UNHRC, 2024).

According to the latest data from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2025), Honduras has the highest rate of femicides in Latin America and the Caribbean, with approximately 7 femicides per 100,000 women (HRW, 2025). Recently, following the murder of at least 46 women prisoners on 20 June, the Honduran government restored control and operation of the national penitentiary system to the PMOP” (Amnesty International, 2024).

#### *Safety and Security*

Honduras is one of the most violent countries in the world, with police reporting 3,035 murders in 2023, a homicide rate of 31 per 100,000 people. Between January and September 2024, preliminary police data indicated 1,854 murders, a 26 % drop compared to the same period in 2023 (HRW, 2025).

Like her predecessors, Castro (current President of Honduras) has struggled to address widespread violence within democratic norms. Ultimately, she declared a national emergency on 3 December 2022, suspending certain rights to combat extortion affecting small businesses,

and urging the security forces and the Military Public Order Police (PMOP), a branch of the armed forces, to join in implementing the suspension of constitutional guarantees. This state of emergency which has been extended 16 times, most recently until 16 November 2024, acknowledged an ongoing failure by the state (BTI, 2024). This National Emergency Declaration suspends the rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly and to be informed of the reason for arrest, among others. The UN Human Rights Committee expressed concern about the extended use of the emergency without a comprehensive, rights-based security policy, saying it resulted in abuses (HRW, 2025; OHCHR, 2024).

Amnesty International (2024) found that since late 2022, Honduran authorities have used disproportionate measures, to deal with what has been described as the “serious violence of organized crime”. As of August 2024, the Honduran ombudsman had received 660 complaints on actions by security agents related to the state of emergency, including due to excessive use of force” (Amnesty International, 2024). However, despite calls from various international organizations, and reports of possible cases of human rights violations and crimes under international law by members of the PMOP, including enforced disappearance, torture and excessive use of force, PMOP continues to be involved in the application of security measures.

In June 2024, the government announced new measures aimed at tackling organized crime, including the construction of a mega prison and collective trials for alleged members of gang, which pose a threat to the rights of humane treatment of prisoners and to a fair trial. Persisting structural problems, including overcrowding and inadequate infrastructure challenge the efficacy of this plan. As of September 2024, prisons held over 19,000 detainees, 21% more than their capacity. Official statistics show almost half of the people were in pretrial detention (HRW, 2025).

#### *Education Rights*

Illiteracy is a significant problem in Honduras. While the country has a good record of enrolling children in primary education (96.53%, according to a recent report by USAID) and literacy rates have remained stable (88.5% in 2019), drop-out rates continue to be high once children enter secondary education, particularly among boys (BTI, 2024). Only 56 % of children between 12 and 14, and 28 % between 15 and 17, were attending school. School attendance rates are significantly lower in rural areas Furthermore, over 31 % of people aged 60 and older and over 13 % of people over 15 years old could not read or write in 2023 (HRW, 2025).

In July 2024, Honduras co-sponsored a UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) resolution establishing a working group that would draft a new optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the rights to early childhood education, free pre-primary and secondary education (HRW, 2025; Sheppard, 2024; UNHRC, 2024).

#### *Human Rights, Migration and Internal Displacement*

Gang violence and other factors have also caused the internal displacement of about 247,000 people between 2019 and 2024, government data shows. As of 2023, there were 216,000 Honduran asylum seekers abroad, mostly in the United States and Mexico, with 84,000 others recognized as refugees (HRW, 2025; UNHCR, 2025).



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